

**TESTIMONY OF ROBERT MAGNAN DIRECTOR,  
FORT PECK TRIBES FISH & GAME DEPARTMENT  
TO  
MONTANA LEGISLATURE'S HOUSE  
FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS COMMITTEE**

My name is Robert Magnan and I'm an enrolled member of the Fort Peck Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes. I'm also the Director of the Fort Peck Tribes Fish & Game Department. I'm here today to speak against Senate Bill 144 which is to Revise laws governing translocation of bison and prohibit free roaming bison.

The bills sponsor brought an almost-identical bill to the Legislature 2 years ago in which at that time he made his intent clear to the Senate Agriculture Committee that he wanted to prevent any bison to be relocated on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation. The bills sponsor also stated that no one wanted bison in northeastern Montana although he forgot to ask the members of the Fort Peck Tribes which also live in his district. Other concerns in that proposed bill was the spread of contagious diseases mainly brucellosis. If brucellosis is really a concern than why didn't he introduce a bill that would include all wildlife that can carry this disease and infect Montana's Livestock industry.

In this years legislative session Senate Bill 144's sponsor is including a new section which is "Notification to Tribal Governments" which states that the secretary of State shall send a copy of this act to each Tribal Government located on the seven Montana Indian Reservations and to the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe. State Law recognizes that there is a unique government to Government relationship between State Government and the eight Tribal Governments in Montana. The Statutory Principles of State - Tribal relations is cooperation and collaboration, mutual understanding and respect, regular and early communication. The bills sponsor should try to follow these principles instead of attempting to inform the Tribes after the fact.

We as Native peoples are trying to help ourselves and help America preserve a rare and vital resource - genetically pure wild bison, by restoring a small herd to a small part of our Tribal lands. Yet it seems that every step of the way we get blocked by someone utilizing misinformation and scare tactics to prevent our progress. I have been the care taker of the Tribes Buffalo herd for the last 10 years. I have hunted them on foot and I never had a buffalo charge at me as some people have claimed that they are aggressive and dangerous animals. Buffalo will walk away from someone first and will not charged until they are provoked. In the past 8 years I have guided over 150 Buffalo hunts to Montana residents on my reservation and they can all testify to the true nature of these great creatures.